

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 272571

TOSEC 97

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION SECSTATE, INFO AMMAN, BEIRUT, CAIRO,
DAMASCUS, JIDDA, LONDON, DEC 12, FROM TEL AVIV RPTD TO YOU:

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 7172

E O 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, IS

SUBJECT: TERRORIST INCIDENT IN TEL AVIV THEATER

1. FOLLOWING IS EMBASSY SUMMARY OF DEC 11 TEL AVIV
TERRORIST INCIDENT BASED ON INITIAL RADIO AND NEWSPAPER
REPORTS. INVESTIGATION OF INCIDENT IS STILL CONTINUING.

2. ABOUT 22:15 DEC 11 GRENADE ATTACK TOOK PLACE AT
CHEN CINEMA IN HEART OF TEL AVIV IN WHICH THREE PERSONS WERE
KILLED, INCLUDING TERRORIST, AND AT LAST COUNT ABOUT SIXTY
INJURED. RADIO ACCOUNT AT 0800 DEC 12 REPORTED 32 PERSONS
STILL IN HOSPITAL WITH ONE IN CRITICAL CONDITION. ONE OF DEAD
IS BRITISH ENGINEER AND OTHER IS ISRAELI WOMAN. BRITISH
EMBASSY HAS TOLD US THAT ENGINEER WAS RESIDENT IN ISRAEL
AND EMPLOYED BY ISRAELI MACHINERY COMPANY.

3. TERRORIST, ACCORDING TO POLICE, CARRIED POSSIBLY FORGED
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BRITISH PASSPORT, IDENTIFYING HIM AS ALEXANDER ADAM

HOOPER, BORN IN GHANA AND RESIDING IN TURKISH. TAXI DRIVER WHO TOOK HIM FROM AIRPORT TO HOTEL CONFIRMED HE SPOKE TURKISH. PRESS ACCOUNTS STATE THAT HE HAD "EUROPEAN FEATURES". HE APPARENTLY OPERATED ALONE.

4. TERRORIST REPORTEDLY ARRIVED IN ISRAEL MORNING OF DEC 11, ON BOARD EITHER TWA FLIGHT FROM BOMBAY OR AIR FRANCE FLIGHT FROM TEHERAN.

5. ACCORDING TO TEL AVIV POLICE, TERRORIST HAD PURCHASED TICKET FOR FIRST EVENING SHOW AT DOWNTOWN MOVIE THEATRE. WHEN HE FOUND THAT AUDIENCE THERE WAS VERY SMALL, HE PROCEEDED TO SECOND SHOWING AT ANOTHER THEATRE LOCATED IN DIZENGOFF SQUARE (TEL AVIV'S VERSIONS OF TIMES SQUARE) IN WHICH THERE WAS LARGE AUDIENCE. ACCORDING TO BOMB EXPERT, TERRORIST PROBABLY DID NOT INTEND TO COMMIT SUICIDE. TERRORIST THREW TWO OR THREE GRENADES. WHILE THROWING ADDITIONAL GRENADE, HIS HAND MAY ACCIDENTALLY HAVE HIT REAR WALL OF THEATRE, LEADING TO PREMATURE EXPLOSION OF GRENADE AND DETONATING TWO OTHER GRENADES STILL ON HIS PERSON.

6. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, POLICE WHO SEARCHED HOTEL ROOM OCCUPIED BY TERRORIST FOUND LARGE QUANTITY OF EXPLOSIVES HIDDEN IN FALSE BOTTOM OF SUITCASE. GRENADES USED IN ATTACK WERE HAND-MADE.

7. SOME EYEWITNESSES TO ATTACK WERE CRITICAL OF SECURITY MEASURES IN EFFECT AT CHEN CINEMA. BOTH POLICE MINISTER HILLEL AND TEL AVIV MAYOR LAHAT POINTED OUT DIFFICULTY OF DETECTING HAND GRENADES WITHOUT BODY SEARCHES, WHICH HAVE NOT YET BEEN INSTITUTED AT CINEMAS. (COMMENT: SEARCH OF BRIEFCASES AND HANDBAGS IS ROUTINE MATTER AT PUBLIC GATHERING PLACES.) INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED TO EXAMINE QUESTION OF POSSIBLE NEGLIGENCE IN SECURITY CONTROLS.

8. HILLEL IN RADIO INTERVIEW HAS COMMENTED THAT INCIDENT DEMONSTRATES THAT ENTIRE COUNTRY IS BATTLEGROUND OF TERRORIST ACTIVITY, " TEL AVIV CAN SOMETIMES FIND ITSELF IN THIS SITUATION IN WHICH VERY MANY SETTLEMENTS IN THE COUNTRY FIND CONFIDENTIAL

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THEMSELVES."

9. COMMENT: FACT IS THAT THIS IS FIRST INCIDENT OF THIS MAGNITUDE IN TEL AVIV IN MANY YEARS. PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT ON BULK OF POPULATION WILL PROBABLY BE FAR MORE PROFOUND THAN IN CASES OF CROSSBORDER OPERATIONS AGAINST NORTHERN SETTLEMENT TOWNS. IT IS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT HOW ISRAELIS WILL REACT, ALTHOUGH WE HAVE ALREADY HAD INDICATIONS THAT

PEOPLE IN TEL AVIV AREA SENSE SOMEWHAT ANXIOUSLY THAT THIS MAY BE BEGINNING OF NEW INTENSIFIED PHASE IN TERRORIST CAMPAIGN. MAYOR LAHAT HAS SEEN FIT TO URGE POPULATION TO CONTINUE ATTENDING THEATERS AND OTHER PUBLIC PLACES, POINTING OUT THAT DISRUPTION OF NORMAL URBAN ACTIVITY IS PRECISELY TERRORIST GOAL. PUBLIC REACTION WILL DEPEND ON WHETHER LAST NIGHT'S INCIDENT PROVES TO BE ISOLATED EVENT OR IS FOLLOWED BY MORE OF SAME.

10. WE NOTE THAT PLO HAS AGAIN TAKEN CREDIT FOR INCIDENT, ADDING THAT IT WAS UNDERTAKEN IN REPRISAL FOR ROCKET ATTACKS IN BEIRUT DEC 10 ATTRIBUTED TO ISRAEL. WHETHER OR NOT ISRAELIS ACTUALLY WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR BEIRUT INCIDENT, THEY ARE NOW CONFRONTED BY QUESTION OF WHETHER TO RESPOND IN KIND TO LATEST ATTACK. WE DOUBT THAT GOI WANTS ARENA OF TERRORIST AND COUNTER-TERRORIST ACTIVITIES SHIFTED TO URBAN AREAS, BUT IT MAY CONCLUDE THAT REPRISAL IS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO REASSURE ISRAELI PUBLIC THAT TERRORIST WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO OPERATE WITH IMPUNITY IN URBAN POPULATION CENTERS. DOZIER UNQUOTE. INGERSOLL

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